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OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME/ UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND, THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND AND THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund on its annual session for 1996

At its annual session, the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund agreed that the present report would be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council with, as annexes: (a) the extract of the report on the annual session of the Board dealing with the joint UNDP/UNFPA segment; (b) the extract of the report on the annual session of the Board dealing with the implementation of programming arrangements; and (c) the extract of the report on the second regular session 1996 dealing with evaluation. These extracts are accordingly contained in the annex to the present report.

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I. REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

PART ONE

FOLLOW-UP TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 44/211, 47/199 AND 50/120

I. INTRODUCTION

1. General Assembly resolution 50/120 builds on the previous resolutions 47/199 and 44/211. In this part of the report, the following three major areas common to these resolutions are addressed from the perspective of UNDP: (a) coordination; (b) programme matters; and (c) management, personnel and finance matters.

II. COORDINATION

A. Resident coordinator system

2. During the reporting period and in accordance with the wishes of the Executive Board, UNDP has made an even greater commitment to operating and strengthening the resident coordinator system, which is seen as one of the most valuable tools for the future of the United Nations system. In its decisions 95/22 and 95/23, the Board reaffirmed the mission of UNDP to help the United Nations system become a more unified and powerful force for sustainable human development and gave practical expression to that mission by earmarking an additional 1.7 per cent of total UNDP core resources for support to the United Nations system and aid coordination. This earmarking is for a new facility for programme support to the resident coordinator, in addition to 4.3 per cent of total resources already provided to support United Nations operational activities. The new facility provides extraordinary opportunities in two areas: (a) ensuring coordinated, coherent United Nations programmes at the country level and the mobilization of required resources and (b) exploring innovative ways to achieve greater rationalization of administrative services on an inter-agency basis. Part four of the present document deals with the issue of the resident coordinator system in complex emergencies.

3. As previously reported, through expanded pool arrangements, the recruitment of United Nations resident coordinators/UNDP resident representatives has been opened to other United Nations entities; nine resident coordinators have been directly recruited to date from other United Nations organizations, principally from the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) members. As of December 1995, a total of 45 of the 115 resident coordinators in post come directly from or have worked in an agency other than UNDP. UNDP has made a special effort to recruit from outside the Programme. It is essential that interested agencies make every effort to present the best possible candidates for vacant resident coordinator posts, keeping in mind post profiles. Pursuant to paragraph 37 (b) of General Assembly resolution 50/120, UNDP will make further efforts to develop a special post profile with the host Government before the recruitment process begins.

4. The development of key competencies of United Nations resident coordinators/UNDP resident representatives is receiving special attention. An annual induction briefing for all first-time resident coordinators/resident representatives was established in September 1994, focusing on roles, responsibilities and accountability. An advanced workshop on policy-based programming and services for development for experienced resident coordinators/ resident representatives was piloted in May 1995 by UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Turin Centre in consultation with the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) secretariat. The third in this series of workshops is planned for April 1996. This successful programme is being opened to participants from JCGP and other agencies. It is projected that nearly all current resident coordinators/resident representatives will have participated in at least one of these workshops by the end of 1996. During 1996, UNDP is planning a comprehensive review of resident coordinator/ resident representative competencies.

B. Follow-up to major international conferences

5. As Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development, the Administrator has been assisting the Secretary-General in ensuring effective follow-up at the inter-agency level to the international conferences in the context of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). At its second regular session in 1995, ACC decided to establish three inter-agency task forces that would take a multisectoral, cross-cutting approach to follow-up to the conferences. The task forces were organized on the basis of cross-cutting themes rather than on the basis of individual conferences. The three task forces address: (a) basic social services for all; (b) full employment and sustainable livelihoods for all; and (c) the enabling environment for people-centred sustainable development. Initially, the three task forces are being chaired respectively by UNFPA, ILO and the World Bank. The task forces will seek to provide concrete outputs such as joint or complementary programme proposals and specific guidelines for the resident coordinator. The first task force, which was transformed from the earlier task force on follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), has already provided a set of guidelines to the resident coordinator system on practical follow-up measures for that conference. Following endorsement by the General Assembly of the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Secretary-General has proposed to members of ACC the creation of a fourth task force on empowerment and advancement of women. The Administrator has written to resident coordinators/resident representatives providing them guidance for country-level follow-up based on the outcomes of ACC.

C. Coordination at regional and subregional levels

6. In 1995, UNDP and the regional economic commissions jointly established a task force on strengthening collaboration in six areas: (a) mechanisms for regional level coordination; (b) policy analysis and specific areas of collaboration; (c) incorporation of the regional dimension into country strategy notes; (d) setting up mechanisms for two-way exchange of information; (e) examining execution modalities of regional programmes; and (f) mechanisms

for collaboration on resource mobilization strategies. The task force is chaired by the Associate Administrator and consists of senior officers of the commissions and UNDP. The task force serves to ensure a global overview of ongoing UNDP collaboration with regional economic commissions and has provided added impetus to collaboration at the working level.

7. The Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions hold periodic coordination meetings of United Nations entities and agencies that undertake activities at the regional level. The regional bureaux of UNDP have participated in these meetings.

III. PROGRAMMING MATTERS

A. Country strategy note

8. Through its support facility to the resident coordinator system, UNDP has been supporting resident coordinators in their assistance to Governments, where requested, in preparing country strategy notes (CSNs). As of February 1996, in a total of 131 countries the situation is as follows: the CSN is completed and has been adopted by the Government in 9 countries; a final draft of the CSN is being considered by the Government for approval in 8 countries; preliminary drafts of the CSN have been prepared in 7 countries and in another 19 the CSN is expected to be completed soon. The CSN process is at a very initial stage in 43 countries, and in 39 countries, the Government has not yet made a final decision on undertaking a CSN. In six countries, the Government has decided not to pursue a CSN.

B. Harmonization

9. Within JCGP, UNDP has chaired the subgroup on the harmonization of programme implementation and country-level management since 1995. Also since 1995, UNFPA has chaired the subgroup on the harmonization of programming procedures. During 1995, efforts within these subgroups were accelerated to demonstrate concrete results. Regarding the harmonization of programming cycles, the subgroup divided programme countries into four categories: (a) countries where programming cycles of JCGP members were already harmonized; (b) countries where it is agreed that programming cycles will be harmonized by the year 1999; (c) countries where harmonization is possible; and (d) special cases.

10. Current figures show a total of 27 countries in category (a); 45 in (b); 24 in (c); and 7 in (d). At the country level, UNDP is seeking to ensure the implementation of harmonized cycles through the resident coordinator system in countries in categories (b) and (c). The new programming procedures of UNDP distinguish the programming cycle (which is in principle determined by the Government's planning period) from the financial cycle, which is a three-year rolling cycle. In principle, all funds and programmes should be able to harmonize their programming cycles with the Government's planning period, independently of their own financial cycle.

11. A common JCGP manual on the harmonization of programming procedures, as recommended by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/199, is in the preparatory stage. In this context, the JCGP subgroup on the harmonization of programming procedures has made progress in specific areas such as common guidelines on monitoring and evaluation and a methodology for common country assessments and common databases for programming. There are, however, a number of practical challenges that must still be overcome. For example, not all JCGP members provide assistance in the form of discrete projects or programmes so that common programme or project procedures would not always be practicable. None the less, the building block approach that is being followed is expected to result in specific guidelines in areas where they are feasible.

C. Programme approach

12. The programme approach was promoted by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992, almost concurrently with the beginning of the fifth cycle (1992-1996). However, by the time clear operational guidelines were available, and given the average gestation period of projects, most country programmes had already tied up their resources in new but conventional projects, and in old projects carried over from the fourth cycle. Consequently, most of the country programmes that have undergone mid-term reviews remain largely project-oriented. They are, none the less, better focused, with fewer concentration areas (four on average), than during the fourth cycle. A further step towards the programme approach was achieved by consolidating small projects and regrouping project activities around themes and sectors in order to enhance programme impact, which has led to a global reduction in the historical phenomenon of "project scatter".

13. The thrust to apply the formal programme approach has thus in general been more successful for programmes developed later in the fifth cycle. Significant progress has been noted, for example, in Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia and Nigeria. However, during the overall learning process, some conceptual and operational problems have arisen. For instance, national priorities and national programmes are seldom articulated in the manner and with the level of detail required by the programme approach, which is by definition multisectoral, requiring interministerial coordination and linkages. Flexibility in the interpretation and application of the programme approach modality is therefore essential.

14. A few Governments remain wary of the added value of the programme approach vis-à-vis a large conventional project, for example, considering its high costs (information, formulation, opportunity, management, staff time), especially in the context of overall cutbacks in administrative budgets. Some countries have questioned the value of the programme approach as an instrument of resource mobilization: they have experienced a general failure to attract additional resources through the modality despite extensive prior consultations with donors, including bilateral donors. This has strongly suggested that, all things considered, most donors still seem to prefer to work within their own structures.

15. To facilitate the understanding and adoption of the programme approach in country programming, UNDP has prepared PSD/PSIA guidelines (1993), a training package, including a training video (1994) and has contributed to the work on guidelines on monitoring and evaluation guidelines on the programme approach through CCPOQ (1994). UNDP is also collaborating with the ILO Turin Centre and the ACC/CCPOQ in the preparation of a generic programme-approach training package for use by the United Nations development system and other interested bodies. UNDP is presently carrying out an assessment of its overall experience with the application of the programme approach and will shortly issue a revised set of process instruments on this modality.

D. Common guidelines at the field level for the recruitment, training, and remuneration of national project personnel

16. In following up on paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution 50/120, UNDP will work with other JCGP partners within the context of the subgroup on the harmonization of programming procedures to develop these common guidelines, taking into account remuneration scales and practices that apply to national Professional staff in country offices, recognizing the different terms of reference of project personnel. A specific working group of this subgroup has already produced draft guidelines on the separate issue of payments to government staff in the context of projects. No conceptual problems are foreseen in dealing with the project personnel issue, which is already extensively covered by procedures at the level of individual funds and programmes. The task will be to build on common ground between the procedures of individual funds and programmes.

E. National execution and national capacity-building

17. National execution. An increase in the number of programmes and projects managed under the modality of national execution was reported in almost all mid-term reviews of fifth cycle country programmes. The modality has been useful in fostering the ownership of country programmes and the integration of external cooperation into national programmes. National institutions are generally assuming increasing responsibility for the recruitment of project staff, placement of fellows, procurement of equipment, financial management and reporting and other implementation activities.

18. At the same time, some administrative problems with this approach have been noted in a number of mid-term reviews. The general experience is that current procedures for its implementation are cumbersome, especially when compared with national procedures and those of other development partners. Particular concern was expressed about the practice of quarterly requests for advances and accompanying expenditure reports, which in the experience of some countries was regarded as time-consuming and not consistent with local practice.

19. In general, country offices and Governments have coped with the administrative problems of national execution in a number of ways. One approach has been to raise the understanding of national execution procedures and

accountability requirements through extensive regional and national training workshops. Other approaches have included the creation of special, project-funded national execution units (e.g., China, Egypt, India, Lebanon, Malawi, Viet Nam, Zambia); the issuance of country-specific national execution guidelines in addition to the standard UNDP guidelines; and the provision of direct support by the UNDP country office and/or the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

20. The Administrator has taken note of the experience with national execution as reflected in the mid-term review exercises, especially the need to review the nature and frequency of its procedures and requirements to bring them closer to national practices and those of other development partners, without compromising financial and substantive accountability. A formal evaluation of the national execution modality covering 11 countries and 35 projects was carried out in mid-1995 and its conclusions and recommendations will be fully considered in updating national execution procedures and requirements and in ensuring that its implementation enhances capacity-building and national ownership of development activities.

21. Capacity development. Capacity development was identified as the central objective of most country programmes that have undergone mid-term reviews, except in a few countries where the focus has shifted towards humanitarian support, including direct support and services, as in, for example, Burundi, Haiti and Rwanda.

22. Most country programmes espoused conventional strategies for capacity development, specifically the provision of training in all its varied forms - workshops, seminars, on-the-job training, fellowships and the assignment of international staff both to train national counterparts and to provide line services. In general, these approaches have been successful in raising individual and institutional skill levels. However, UNDP has also learned that capacity development is a complex phenomenon, requiring interactions of decision-making systems at various levels - central, regional, subregional and local. Accordingly, in a number of country programmes, UNDP has sought to involve the intended beneficiaries in capacity-development activities as part of the process of empowering them. Particularly successful efforts were reported in Myanmar and Sudan in the area development schemes and in Argentina and Peru in strengthening the capacity of provincial and local governments to formulate, implement and manage development activities.

23. In general, the continuing constraints to the development of sustainable national capacities in the areas of UNDP support, remain, in the less developed countries, the absence of a critical mass of suitably trained national staff, the high turnover of these staff and the non-fulfilment of national budgetary and in-kind commitments to projects. Underlying these operational constraints is the continuing absence or insufficiency of an enabling public sector environment, particularly the lack of adequate compensation and incentive systems.

24. UNDP attaches particular importance to issues of national capacity development and has recently issued a publication on the subject (Building Sustainable Capacity: Challenges for the Public Sector (1994), undertaken in

conjunction with the Harvard Institute for International Development). The publication is particularly useful in helping country offices and Governments to assess systematically national capacity-development issues and requirements and to develop appropriate strategies to address them. In addition, UNDP is supporting Governments in their efforts to implement necessary administrative reforms and to create the enabling environment for sustainable capacity development.

F. Agreed division of labour

25. UNDP and other funds and programmes are currently preparing mission statements for submission to their Executive Boards as a means to ensure a legislative basis for further division of labour at the country level. Within the subsidiary machinery of ACC, the inter-agency task forces and CCPOQ in particular are also helping to define the division of labour in view of their collaboration on concrete substantive themes. Assignation of responsibilities to particular funds, programmes and agencies within these mechanisms follows their respective comparative advantages and mandates. The process of assigning responsibilities reaffirms those comparative advantages and differing mandates and can be expected to have a beneficial spill-over effect on more general collaboration between funds, programmes and agencies.

IV. MANAGEMENT, PERSONNEL AND FINANCE MATTERS

A. Management audit systems and aid accountability

26. The JCGP subgroup on the harmonization of programme implementation and country-level management had assigned the subject of management audit systems to a specific working group, which has now concluded its tasks. There have been periodic consultations between the management audit services of the funds and programmes. In the field of management audit systems and approaches, considerable consensus has been achieved, particularly in standards for conduct of auditing.

27. A harmonized Aid Management and Accountability Framework (AMAF) has been developed through collaboration among several donors with UNDP involvement. UNDP hosts the global secretariat for the implementation of this framework. The AMAF methodology was developed as a result of the AMAF initiative taken by a group of donors at a 1990 meeting in Vienna. The initiative calls for greater uniformity in donor accountability requirements - a working group has been established to make specific proposals for the harmonization and simplification of such requirements. The framework is described in greater detail in chapter III, part three, of the present report.

B. Training

28. The JCGP Working Group on Training, which is part of the Subgroup on Personnel and Training, met six times between April and November 1995. Efforts have concentrated on four areas: (a) information exchange on emergency training; (b) development and coordination training; (c) task-sharing on the development of materials; and (d) the role of training in strengthening field collaboration. In terms of system-wide training to support coordination and the resident coordinator system, UNDP has been providing substantive and financial support to specific programmes of the ILO Turin Centre. Special workshops have included those on the programme approach, team-building within the resident coordinator system, and programmes for senior resident coordinators and other field representatives. Evaluations of these training activities have been generally positive, one of the main benefits being the strengthening of interpersonal links between country teams that facilitate collaboration on their return to their duty stations.

C. Gender balance in appointments

29. In 1995, UNDP adopted a comprehensive policy on gender balance. The policy has three principal aspects: (a) management accountability - managers are to be held accountable for promoting gender balance; (b) gender balance targets for all categories of Professional staff; (c) organizational culture - gender-related training initiatives are being proposed and developed. Also, UNDP participated in and supported the 1995 inter-agency consultative process that led to the joint statement of the Executive Heads of ACC members on gender balance, which represents a system-wide consensus on the matter.

D. Decentralization

30. In the ongoing process of ensuring that UNDP is more effective and responsive, decentralization was initiated through the increased delegation of authority with accountability to the country offices. The past few years have witnessed enhanced responsibility of resident representatives on personnel, financial and administrative matters. In line with these changes, project/programme appraisals, work planning and country programme reviews were also submitted to a more decentralized environment.

31. A new initiative will use country offices designated as centres of experimentation as the prime mechanism for implementing decentralization. Increased delegation of authority will be interlinked with the introduction of mechanisms and systems to enforce accountability and improve headquarters and country-office collaboration as well as to assign to headquarters a more effective operational support role. The activities involved include the definition of new revised policies and procedures, the development of new accountability instruments, the re-engineering of UNDP functional processes and the development of information support systems.

E. Common premises and administrative services

32. UNDP has chaired the JCGP subgroup on common premises and services since 1995. As of February 1996, two or more JCGP partner organizations are sharing common premises with UNDP in 52 countries, of which the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) participates in 27 locations. In several of these countries, other United Nations organizations are also sharing in common premises (e.g. the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)). Based on present plans to increase substantially the targets for common premises and services, in line with paragraph 47 of General Assembly resolution 50/120, JCGP organizations will share common premises in at least 68 countries by the end of 1997. Construction under the lease/purchase modality is foreseen mostly in least developed countries. In all cases, it is foreseen that at the end of the leasing period, ownership of the premises will revert to the host country on the understanding that the United Nations organizations will be able to use the premises rent-free and on a permanent basis.

33. In 1995, construction projects for common premises in four countries were completed. Of these, three premises are already occupied and are included in the above figure of 52 common premises. A draft proposal has been formulated and circulated among JCGP partners for the establishment of a joint monitoring and management mechanism for common premises and services that would provide for greater efficiency and economies of scale and would avoid duplication of efforts. The project foresees financial contributions from all participating organizations for the staffing of a joint management unit and its operating expenses. All four organizations have confirmed their participation. A harmonized submission to the respective executive boards on the future operational direction and policies governing the establishment of common premises and services is foreseen during 1996. Preparatory work for the identification and eventual selection of investors/developers for future common premises has included international and local advertising and has resulted so far in establishing the interest of 37 potential investors. A cost-effectiveness study is undertaken for each country. If the lease/purchase modality is not the most cost-effective solution, other more efficient alternatives will be pursued.

34. In the area of common services, common standards and guidelines for the installation of local area networks and information technology infrastructure were developed in 1995 and have been distributed to all country offices. The new common premises and services established in South Africa could in future serve as a model for replication in other locations. UNDP, with its JCGP partners, will seek to increase the number of common services accounts in all locations where JCGP partner organizations share common premises, in order to economize on common charges.

PART TWO

FOLLOW-UP TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1995/50: COLLABORATION WITH THE BRETTON WOODS INSTITUTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

35. In 1995, within the context of the Senior Officials Meeting of the United Nations Secretariat, under the chairmanship of the Associate Administrator of UNDP, a special working group was created on strengthening cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions. The working group has a system-wide perspective but is in the first instance examining common areas of interest among entities of the Secretariat.

36. For its own part, UNDP has been collaborating actively with the World Bank for many years. The former UNDP/World Bank Task Force was redefined in 1995 to focus on the following areas: (a) policy-level dialogue; (b) country-level collaboration; (c) aid-coordination and (d) complex emergencies. In keeping with the common reporting format of the funds and programmes, these subjects are divided below into collaboration in policy matters and collaboration in operational activities at the country level.

II. COLLABORATION IN POLICY MATTERS

37. At the global level, in the context of the United Nations system initiative on follow-up to international conferences, the World Bank chairs the ACC Inter-agency Task Force on the Enabling Environment for People-Centred Sustainable Development, in which UNDP takes part. Similarly, the World Bank has contributed substantively to the United Nations Special Initiative for Africa. In the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Bank and UNDP have shared many of the same concerns and their positions have been mutually supportive. Other substantive areas where bilateral policy-level discussions are under way are in water-resources management, energy, microcredit, poverty assessments and strategies, governance, sustainable management of forests and agricultural research. UNDP is consulting with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the common ground between the IMF concept of "high-quality growth" and the concept of "sustainable human development" mandated to UNDP by its Executive Board. This conceptual work is expected to facilitate greater collaboration at the country level, where, as shown below, IMF is a significant implementing agency for UNDP-funded technical cooperation, particularly in the area of economic management.

III. COLLABORATION IN OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

38. Country-level cooperation with the World Bank has been long established. Many programme country Governments have chosen to use proceeds from World Bank loans for co-financing UNDP-funded projects under the government cost-sharing modality. While this practice is broadly utilized in the Latin America and Caribbean region, current discussions with the World Bank cover the feasibility of expanding the procedure in other regions. Another promising area of collaboration is in countries emerging from conflicts. One modality being developed is the use of UNDP-managed resources to facilitate and enable the re-entry of the World Bank in post-conflict situations in countries requiring resources for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

39. UNDP and the World Bank are seeking to strengthen their collaboration in Consultative Group and round-table meetings. A formal agreement on aid coordination already exists between both organizations and has established normal roles for both organizations during the various phases of the consultative group and round-table mechanisms, recognizing that it is the prerogative of the Government to choose the actual coordination mechanism. A further agreement is being reached regarding respective roles of the organizations, particularly in follow-up to Consultative Groups and round-table meetings, including the question of national capacity-building.

40. UNDP and IMF are seeking to increase country-level collaboration in both policy and operations. The main issue regarding collaboration in policy is for Governments to establish links between the preparatory processes of both the policy framework paper, where the IMF and World Bank have been primarily involved, and the country strategy note, where United Nations funds, programmes and agencies have been primarily involved. With regard to operations, UNDP has had an executing-agency agreement with IMF since 1989. To date, UNDP has provided financing of some $21.6 million for technical cooperation projects implemented by IMF and aimed at building national capacity in such areas as fiscal affairs and central banking.

PART THREE

FOLLOW-UP TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1995/51

I. INTRODUCTION

41. The themes of monitoring, evaluation, national capacity for management and coordination of international assistance and cost-effectiveness are closely related to the implementation of the triennial policy review. However, the themes are dealt with in detail here in view of Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/51 on these themes.

II. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

42. UNDP has already given high priority to monitoring and evaluation by addressing the issue of impact and performance through a wide range of entry levels: project; programme (sector and theme); country programme (mid-term review and evaluation); and the programme approach.

43. The monitoring and evaluation system in UNDP covers additional important non-indicative planning figure (IPF) large programmes such as the Special Programme Resources (SPR)-funded programmes, Capacity 21 and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

44. UNDP has also developed a portfolio of strategic evaluations in parallel with more traditional performance evaluations. Such evaluations include the following topics: national execution; co-financing modalities; the resident coordinator system; and SPR.

45. UNDP is revisiting its own guidelines for monitoring and evaluation in the light of the experience gained and is preparing new guiding principles for country programme and participatory evaluations.

46. UNDP is strengthening the feedback system through training, regional workshops, publications, special presentations to the senior management and decentralization of the central evaluation database.

III. STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITY FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

47. The concern for improved management and coordination of aid is part of the overall concern for improved public sector management, and the effective and efficient use of public resources. UNDP has taken the steps described below to strengthen the management and coordination of international assistance.

48. An in-depth study of the area was undertaken by the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support in 1994, entitled "Aid Coordination and Aid Management by Governments: A Role for UNDP" and the experience of UNDP in the field was evaluated by an independent team. The policy recommendations were approved by

senior management and provide a stronger focus for UNDP efforts in the area of strengthening national capacity for aid coordination and management.

49. The Administrator has approved additional funds to support round-table meetings and UNDP involvement in Consultative Group meetings. Action has been taken to improve UNDP support in the round-table process and to ensure adequate country-level follow-up.

50. The harmonized Aid Management and Accountability Framework (AMAF), mentioned in section IV A of part one of the present report, mentioned in section IV A of part one of the present report, has been implemented with the help of a global secretariat located in UNDP. The framework outlines a set of basic principles covering: national management; national accountability; national accounts; implementing agents; financial management systems and controls; supreme audit institutions; disbursement methods; direct payments; standardized formats; and national procurement.

51. An important point signalled in the AMAF is that government institutional arrangements and commitments, policies, systems, human and financial resources must all be conducive to effective management and accountability. The creation of a focal point for aid management and accountability (to be known as an Office of Aid Management) is recommended.

52. The approach to improved aid management and accountability is based on a joint commitment by donor agencies and the host countries: (a) to strengthen national capacity in public financial management systems and (b) to streamline and harmonize the reporting requirements and procedures of the various donors.

IV. IMPROVING NATIONAL PARTICIPATION IN THE EVALUATION OF UNITED NATIONS OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

53. The UNDP initiatives for change strategy re-emphasizes that all UNDP programmes are country-driven and country-owned. Some 70 per cent of all UNDP projects are nationally executed, thus placing the primary onus of managing evaluations clearly on the national authorities. UNDP is assisting national authorities in this task. Three pilot regional workshops on monitoring and evaluation have been programmed to target national programme officers, government officials responsible for evaluation and civil society members. Two of these workshops were undertaken in 1995 and a third is foreseen for 1996. The objectives of the workshops are to impart concepts and skills in designing and managing evaluations, particularly within the concept of the programme approach. The workshops present monitoring and evaluation as tools to facilitate decision-making and learning as well as to enhance accountability. They are expected to have a multiplier effect as participants in turn train others on their return. Training materials and packages will be made available through the UNDP country office network to facilitate further multiplication of training in this area.

V. PROMOTING GREATER COLLABORATION IN EVALUATION

54. UNDP has been promoting greater inter-agency collaboration in evaluation through its chairing of the Interagency Working Group on Evaluation (IAWG). The most important issues recently examined by the IAWG include (a) building national capacity in monitoring and evaluation; (b) guidelines for evaluation of gender issues; (c) evaluation data bases; and (d) rating systems for projects. The IAWG has developed some common understanding on these topics. The IAWG last met in November 1995 to examine, among other subjects: (a) national monitoring and evaluation capacity-building; (b) participatory evaluation; (c) evaluation databases; and (d) performance rating systems for programmes/projects. The 1996 meeting will cover institutional issues, impact measurement and evaluation capacity-building in programme countries.

55. In the context of the IAWG, UNDP has been developing with agency partners a document entitled "Operational guidance on the application of the guiding principles for a monitoring and evaluation methodology in the context of the programme approach". The aim of this document, which will be distributed widely in 1996, is to advise programme countries and agency country offices in utilizing the previously approved guiding principles.

56. Through the JCGP subgroup on evaluation, UNDP is developing common harmonized guidelines for monitoring and evaluation at the project level, the country level (programme, theme and sector) and the cross-country level (theme).

57. As chair of the IAWG, UNDP is organizing some evaluation working groups that will: (a) discuss ways and means for the joint implementation of Economic and Social Council decision 90/51 as far as it requires a system-wide approach and (b) support the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat in implementing paragraph 56 of General Assembly resolution 50/120, in which the General Assembly requires an evaluation of the impact of operational activities for development.

VI. SCOPE FOR IMPROVING THE COST EFFECTIVENESS OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

58. Some information on this topic has already been provided in part one, section IV E, of the present report. UNDP will continue in 1996 and beyond to build on the initial experience of the common services account (CSA), based on considerations of cost-effectiveness. The CSA is a major innovation in improving cost-effectiveness through economies of scale and improved coordination in the provision of services. The CSA involves a certain pooling of administrative services with pro-rata cost-recovery from each agency, according to usage. The principle is, of course, simpler to apply in new duty stations where the United Nations is setting up a presence, such as in South Africa.

PART FOUR

FOLLOW-UP TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1995/56: HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

59. The following information has been prepared in compliance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 but also taking into account paragraph 51 of General Assembly resolution 50/120. Within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC-WG), UNDP is participating in the task force established to follow-up to Council resolution 1995/56. In attending to the 10 indicative issues annexed to resolution 1995/56, the task force has identified, for detailed examination, issues related to evaluation; resource mobilization; country-level coordination; roles and responsibilities related to internally displaced persons; the relationship between relief and development; human resource development and staff security; and strengthening the capacity of local coping mechanisms. The results of these consultations and information from participating agencies is being reported on separately, from a system-wide perspective, in the report of the Secretary-General to the Council.

60. At its first regular session 1996, the Executive Board asked UNDP to provide information on the role of the resident coordinator in crises, coordination of appeals and the relation of the round-table mechanism to consolidated appeals by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and issues related to overlap with other United Nations organizations in specific activities. The Executive Board also requested information on the resource situation of the Emergency Response Division. That information will be provided at a later date in a separate report.

61. In order to respond to the requests of the Executive Board and to further expand upon the particular concerns of UNDP, selected issues are presented below.

II. ROLE AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Primary functions

62. UNDP has undertaken to produce a compendium of its experience in countries in special situations, reflecting a range of programme activities and services. They can be summarized as follows:

(a) Identifying the elements of an overall strategy or framework for national and international action and relevant programmes, whether in conjunction with the consolidated inter-agency appeals launched by DHA, through the round-table mechanism or special consultations or through ad hoc programming missions;

(b) Carrying out activities of a semi-emergency character, with extrabudgetary funds provided by one or several donors, including funds from

United Nations assessed budgets when these activities do not fall within the mandate of a particular United Nations entity;

(c) Financing and monitoring specific activities, of a preventive and curative nature, from general resources or special accounts under UNDP control, using other United Nations agencies and civil society organizations as implementing partners;

(d) Coordinating in-country programme implementation through the resident coordinator's office and providing administrative support services for the donor community.

B. Addressing the needs of internally displaced persons

63. UNDP sees its role and responsibilities in response to internally displaced persons primarily at the prevention and resettlement phases. It is therefore undertaking to strengthen programmes aiming to reduce social and economic vulnerabilities which may lead to internal displacement, to continue to provide appropriate activities, even under conditions of volatility and crisis, to reduce such displacement and to ensure timely programmes to increase the absorptive capacity of communities to resettle uprooted populations at the earliest opportunity.

III. CAPACITY TO RESPOND

64. UNDP responses to crisis and disaster situations are derived from the three goals endorsed in Executive Board decision 94/14 in support of sustainable human development and are supportive of the four priority areas of poverty eradication, job creation, environmental regeneration and advancement of women also endorsed in decision 94/14.

65. UNDP has demonstrated a capacity to respond to countries in special circumstances in the following nine general categories: (a) disaster prevention, preparedness and support to coordination in sudden crisis conditions; (b) area rehabilitation to settle uprooted populations; (c) rebuilding institutions and improving governance; (d) reintegrating demobilized combatants; (e) demining; (f) organizing national elections; (g) stimulating the private sector and income-generation; (h) macroeconomic planning and economic reform; and (i) managing delivery of programme aid.

66. New guidelines and procedures are currently being formulated to strengthen the capacity of country offices to address the primary functions identified above in a timely and effective manner. The framework for these guidelines is being presented separately in response to Executive Board decision 96/07.

Level of delegation of authority and procedures for rapid response

67. In selected disaster-prone countries and upon the occurrence of a significant disaster, the resident representative/resident coordinator has operated with special delegated authority to disburse up to $50,000 with a delayed requirement to formalize this action through a project document. New procedures are proposed that would raise the amount of this authority to $200,000 and extend the delegation to all country offices to facilitate their immediate response to sudden crises or disasters.

IV. RESOURCES AND EVALUATION

A. Reporting, evaluation and the impact of the allocation of resources

68. Allocations from SPR category A - disaster mitigation have been the major source of funding for UNDP activities in emergencies during the fifth cycle. Category A of the SPR is divided into four subcategories: A1 - Disaster preparedness and management; A2 - Emergency phase activities; A3 - Rehabilitation and reconstruction; and A4 - Refugees, returnees and displaced persons. A report of the experience and lessons learned during the course of 1995 is provided to the Executive Board in the main programme record, addendum 1 to the annual report of the Administrator (DP/1996/18/Add.1).

69. Feedback from country office reports shows that, while modest in size, many SPR allocations have been used imaginatively and to good effect. Lessons learned show that in addition to reinforcing government capacity, UNDP country offices can render valuable coordination services to the national and international community in such areas as early warning and disaster response. A result in many countries has been to create a new awareness of the ready but unused potential for improving disaster preparedness and to increase the priority of this item on national agendas. SPR funding has had considerable impact on main-streaming the issue of disaster management into the overall development process, promoting development initiatives such as those focusing on increased food security, improved road networks, land-use zoning, or construction codes which, in turn, have a direct impact on reducing vulnerability to disaster. At the same time, SPR funding has been increasingly utilized to respond to the complex emergency situation.

70. An in-depth evaluation of the use and impact of SPR funds throughout the fifth cycle will be undertaken in 1996. The experience gained in the management and administration of these funds will provide a valuable input for UNDP in its management of successor arrangements pertaining to resources for development in countries in special situations (see Executive Board decision 95/23, table, line 1.1.3).

B. Strengthening local capacity and coping mechanisms

71. Support for the development of national disaster-management plans and the establishment of early warning systems and national networks of coordinating bodies has been increasingly supported by UNDP through SPR-funded projects. The Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP), co-managed by UNDP and DHA has also provided further impetus to national authorities to identify and address needs for capacity-building appropriate to the country situation. Building on the previous experience of the DMTP, organized primarily in countries with a high vulnerability to natural disasters, activities during 1995 expanded to embrace the post-conflict concerns of countries such as Mozambique and Papua New Guinea. Plans are under way to implement the DMTP in 1996 in countries directly affected by humanitarian emergency in order to strengthen their capacity to manage and cope with the impact of crisis.

72. In addressing the inequities between social groups, which contribute to conflict and complex emergency situations, UNDP will be significantly strengthening its ability to provide programmes of preventive development by further developing its policy and substantive support base. Directed primarily to the goal of avoiding such emergencies, these programmes will also attend to the needs of local communities to build capacities to sustain lives and livelihoods and develop mechanisms to cope with crisis conditions. During crises, UNDP will seek to maintain active programmes of assistance that can prevent massive dislocation of populations and that will hasten the return from relief to recovery. Building upon the experience and monitoring of events over the past year, it is expected that 1996 will see the implementation of a range of significant projects of a curative nature, responding to the rehabilitation and recovery needs of a number of countries currently emerging from civil strife.

C. Participation in consolidated appeals and coordination with the round-table mechanism

73. Within the context of the IASC, the inter-agency consolidated appeal process coordinated by DHA is being reviewed by participating United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Governments. The overall experience of UNDP is that the consolidated appeal does not provide resources for those initiatives that would significantly address the need for continued developmental activities in those areas of relative stability or in those that would serve to facilitate a rapid transition from the humanitarian crisis to recovery. UNDP is undertaking to work closely with DHA throughout 1996 in order to develop appropriate mechanisms to facilitate the formulation of coordinated strategies and programmes responding to relief and development requirements.

74. At its seventh session in September 1995, the CCPOQ recognized the critical nature of the post-conflict situation facing the United Nations system, requiring priority attention. UNDP and the United Nations Department of Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS) and DHA agreed to initiate, with the involvement of all concerned organizations, a number of first steps in this regard, including a review of new sources and methods of funding or contributing in kind. As the focal point for this review, UNDP will be

undertaking wide-based consultations with other United Nations programmes, funds and agencies and Bretton Woods institutions towards identifying efficient and effective mechanisms to ensure the coordination of resource mobilization approaches that will meet the full range of requirements of countries in these special situations.

V. COORDINATION

A. Role of the resident coordinator in crises

75. In keeping with General Assembly resolution 46/182, the resident coordinator should normally coordinate the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system at the country level. At the same time, the resident coordinator functions to ensure the preparedness of the United Nations system and to assist in the speedy transition from relief to development. In this regard, the resident coordinator also serves as the in-country focal point for the United Nations system in the formulation of a collaborative framework for rehabilitation and recovery efforts.

76. The resident coordinator and the disaster management team, comprised largely of the in-country representatives of the United Nations system, also serve as the first line of initial response to a complex emergency. In most instances characterized by complex emergency conditions, the resident coordinator serves also as the designated humanitarian coordinator, representing and reporting directly to the United Nations emergency relief coordinator in facilitating and ensuring the quick, effective, and well-coordinated provision of humanitarian assistance to those seriously affected by the emergency.

77. Support of the United Nations system to the resident coordinator in respect of responsibilities to be discharged in response to natural disasters has facilitated this role to a great extent. However, the experience has been that resources required to strengthen the capacity of the office of the resident coordinator to meet these responsibilities in conditions of complex emergency have been extremely limited. UNDP has initiated efforts within the framework of the IASC to reach a broader consensus within the United Nations system on the appropriate in-country structures and sources of ready funds, or in-kind resources, to meet the requirements of the resident coordinator to function effectively.

B. Overlap with other United Nations organizations

78. At the country level, the resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator, where designated, along with the established disaster management team, outline the respective responsibilities of each partner so that overlap can be avoided. Sector specific groups with identified lead agencies are normally established, comprising representatives of all pertinent United Nations organizations, NGOs, and bilateral and multilateral organizations with operations in the sector. While more than one organization may be involved in a particular sector, the group is mandated to reach agreement on collaborative

initiatives and, where appropriate, the selection of geographic areas of focus for individual organizations.

C. Development of cooperative memorandums of understanding

79. Existing memorandums of understanding with other organizations are being reviewed and revised to ensure that they provide a framework for clear and comprehensive action between UNDP and its operational partners. Given the exigency and diversity of requirements posed by emergency situations, country level memorandums of understanding and exchanges of letters of agreement guiding specific operational activities have also proven to be an effective mechanism to enhance collaboration. Joint working groups and task forces between UNDP and other organizations (such as UNHCR and the World Bank) have also been established and will be strengthened to further reduce gaps and overlaps in resource mobilization and programme activities.

VI. EVALUATION AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

80. The success of the DMTP in bringing together national authorities and in-country staff of the United Nations system has been documented in an in-depth evaluation completed by UNDP in 1995. Future plans for the DMTP are presently being formulated towards revising its management structure and substantive focus to strengthen its ability to serve system-wide staff development needs. UNDP is also participating in the design of the Complex Emergency Training Initiative (CETI) to be launched by DHA this year. Complementary to staff training programmes of individual organizations, the CETI will bring a common focus to meeting skill and knowledge requirements of staff operating within the complex emergency environment.

81. UNDP has also recently completed a working paper on building staff competencies relating to emergency conditions and will be implementing the recommendations of the paper during 1996. Further UNDP initiatives in this area are also addressed in part one of the present report.

Annex

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS ON SESSIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND OF THE UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

I. EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT ON THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD DEALING WITH THE JOINT UNDP/UNFPA SEGMENT

UNDP/UNFPA SEGMENT

V. REPORTS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

96. The Executive Board had before it the reports of the Administrator (DP/1996/18/Add.2) and the Executive Director (DP/FPA/1996/17 (Part II)) to the Economic and Social Council, which were introduced by the Associate Administrator and the Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Administration) of UNFPA respectively.

97. The Associate Administrator provided an overview of the four sections of the report, pointing out that the common format, agreed upon by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) represented a major step forward in joint reporting to the Economic and Social Council and would facilitate the work of delegations. Care had been taken to make the report more thorough, detailed and analytical in response to past concerns of delegations.

98. The Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Administration) highlighted recent developments in the areas addressed by the report, in particular regarding inter-agency collaboration. He emphasized the progress that had been made towards increased harmonization of procedures and coordination of field-level activities. He also identified some of the problems and challenges contained in the report for discussion by the Economic and Social Council.

99. In his capacity as Chairman of the Inter-agency Task Force (IATF) on follow-up to the Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56, the Director of the Geneva Office, Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), had been invited to the present session by the President to provide an overview of the work of the task force. He explained that the IATF had been established within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in order to facilitate system-wide, coordinated follow-up to the resolution. The role of DHA was to support that work, to ensure that agencies were kept informed of progress in addressing the resolution and to undertake briefings with Member States. The Chairman of the IATF commended the report of the Administrator, indicating that UNDP had been an active member of both IATF and IASC, which was the principal mechanism for coordination among organizations involved in humanitarian activities. In referring further to the report, he highlighted three issues of key relevance to the work being done by UNDP: (a) resource mobilization, (b) the concurrent nature of relief and development activities, and (c) internally displaced persons (IDPs).

100. The Chairman noted that the Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal (CAP) was not intended to raise resources for development and that additional work was required to establish consultative mechanisms to coordinate the mobilization of resources to meet country needs. In that regard, he referred to the presentation by UNDP of a comprehensive paper on resource mobilization as a positive contribution the work of the Consultative

Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and IATF. Noting that relief activities did not take place in a vacuum but in the context of development and rehabilitation, he also appreciated the work that UNDP had been undertaking in the examination of the connection between relief and development, referring to the UNDP contribution to the CCPOQ examination of post-conflict recovery strategies. Referring to the UNDP paper on successor arrangements, the Chairman also welcomed UNDP initiatives foreseen under target for resource assignment from the core (line 1.1.3) (TRAC 3), which reflected a reassessment and contribution to the realignment of relationships between UNDP and other operational agencies. He also welcomed the prospect of UNDP making available increased resources in response to the needs of countries in special development situations. Noting that more work was required to clarify roles within the United Nations system with respect to IDPs, the Chairman of IATF observed the positive direction being taken by UNDP in attempting to provide greater clarity for its own role in that regard.

101. Numerous delegations commented on the structure and contents of the reports of UNDP and UNFPA. Several delegations pointed out that the present session should not be devoted to a discussion of the substance of the reports, which would really be done in the Economic and Social Council, but should instead identify specific issues for consideration and recommendations by the Council. Specific comments were presented according to the four major areas of the reports.

102. Format issues. Many delegations welcomed the reports as a clear improvement over previous reports and commended the common format, which facilitated comparisons. A few delegations would have preferred a common report. Some delegations commented that the reports could have proposed options for recommendations to the Economic and Social Council, based on a more thorough analysis of problems than contained in the present reports. Paragraphs 2 to 5 of document DP/FPA/1996/17 (Part II) were mentioned as a good example of how issues should be discussed in future reports.

103. Follow-up to the triennial policy review. Speaking on the resident coordinator system, several delegations commended UNDP efforts so far on expanding the pool of recruitment but urged that those efforts be intensified. One delegation requested UNFPA to inform the Executive Board about the results of discussions at the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) High-Level Meeting on experiences with the resident coordinator system. It was noted that the system seemed to be functioning more effectively during crisis situations and the factors influencing that should be examined. UNFPA was requested to clarify the future role of the newly designated UNFPA representatives in the context of the resident coordinator system.

104. Follow-up to major conferences. Delegations requested clarification on concrete outputs achieved so far, especially at the field-level, with regard to enhanced coordination and the utilization of guidelines, such as those issued by the inter-agency task force of the International Conference on Population and Development implementation. In that context, there were also questions about the inputs of UNDP and UNFPA to upcoming conferences, namely Habitat II and the World Food Summit. One delegation expressed

concern about the absence of population issues in the documents of the United Nations Special Initiative on Africa and requested an update on the integration of population and reproductive health components into the Initiative. Both organizations were asked to inform the Executive Board of their strategies for increased resource mobilization to address the many new concerns that had emerged in the international development field.

105. Several delegations expressed concern at the limited number of country strategy notes (CSNs) that had actually been completed and asked about the reasons for the slow progress. Another delegation expressed concern that the programme approach, although a good concept, had achieved limited progress. Regarding national execution, one delegation requested clarification on the role of national implementation units and their implications for national capacity-building, which some delegations pointed out was fundamental for successful national execution. Emphasis should also be given to increased training of government staff and project personnel in order to enhance national capacity. One delegation questioned UNFPA on how the Fund's revision of guidelines on national execution was being coordinated with efforts of UNDP in that area. A few delegations requested more figures and information on decentralization in UNDP. While one delegation emphasized the need for further cooperation with regional economic commissions, another cautioned on the establishment of strengthened mechanisms while the role of the commissions was under review. Regarding common premises, many delegations expressed satisfaction with progress achieved and planned. One delegation suggested that the reports should have provided more information about common administrative services. Such services needed to be expanded faster and should include more than information networks.

106. Collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions. Several delegations stressed the importance of closer collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions, but encouraged the organizations to inform the Board of any problems in that regard which could be addressed through the intergovernmental process. One delegation requested information on UNFPA input into the policy framework papers of the World Bank and about the Fund's collaboration with the regional development banks. Information was also requested about the absence of any formal agreements on cooperation between UNFPA and the World Bank. Another delegation inquired as to how the Bretton Woods institutions could be involved in the CSN process.

107. Monitoring and evaluation. One delegation noted that the reports should have provided more information about the impact of evaluations on policy adjustments of the organizations. Further information was requested on recent developments in evaluation in UNDP, particularly in light of the discussions held at the second regular session 1996. With regard to strengthening national capacity for the coordination of international assistance, one delegation asked for clarification from UNFPA on the continued relevance of national population councils or units.

108. Humanitarian activities. Numerous delegations expressed appreciation for the issues raised by the report and by the Chairman of IATF. They stressed the importance of defining the role of UNDP in the overall humanitarian context, specifying that the role of UNDP was not in relief

but in development. Noting that situations and requirements varied by country, further clarification was also required regarding the role of UNDP in such areas as IDPs, demobilization and de-mining. With the current focus on complex emergencies, it was stressed that UNDP should not neglect natural disasters, where the role of the resident coordinator had been important and inter-agency collaboration had often been exemplary. A number of delegations also pointed out the importance of ensuring that practical measures were being taken to ensure collaboration with DHA and with Bretton Woods institutions, especially the World Bank. Many delegations wished to have an opportunity to discuss the matters in more depth and noted that they would return to the subject in the UNDP segment under the discussions of TRAC 3.

109. Replies. The Associate Administrator addressed the specific questions and comments of delegations. He recognized that the report provided comprehensive information but could have had additional analysis to guide the discussions of the Executive Board and the Economic and Social Council.

110. The recruitment of resident coordinators was being opened up to include the large agencies in addition to those of the JCGP. Progressively, as resident coordinators were dedicating more time to coordination activities, they were delegating UNDP representational and operational functions to deputy resident representatives. This delegation was further facilitating the clear separation of resident coordinator functions from UNDP representative and operational functions.

111. Regarding the programme approach, which was progressing steadily, it was necessary to await the outcomes of country programme mid-term reviews and final evaluations, which was where progress would be reflected.

112. The CSN was the product of a Government-owned process and the time taken for its completion depended on the national planning cycle and on the quantity and diversity of inputs required. While only nine CSNs had been completed, the CSNs were in advanced stages of completion or approval in another 34 countries. The CSN process had been initiated and was in earlier stages in another 43 countries. The CSN process was thus active in a total of 86 countries, showing steady progress in fact.

113. Regarding capacity-building for national execution, the training at the country level included government counterparts involved in national execution. The UNDP mission statement would certainly stress capacity-building as part of the enabling environment for sustainable human development. National implementation units were necessary at the present time to ensure compliance with reporting requirements for national execution.

114. The Associate Administrator provided further data on gender balance in UNDP. Currently, 32 per cent of Professionals were women. The overall targets were for 38 per cent in 1997 and 50 per cent by the year 2000. Specific gender targets for 1997 were for women to represent 20 per cent of staff at the D-2 level, 20 per cent of staff at the D-1 level and for 30 out of 132 resident representatives to be women.

Levels attained in 1996 showed that: 20 per cent of staff at the D-2 level and 13 per cent at the D-1 level were women. Of 132 resident representatives in 1996, there were 25 women.

115. With regard to collaboration with the World Bank, a joint letter had been sent by the Administrator and the President of the Bank to resident representatives on means to enhance country-level cooperation. The International Monetary Fund was also interested in developing closer collaboration with UNDP at the country level. Resources mobilization at the country level was an important operational concern of UNDP.

116. With respect to evaluation, in his introductory statement to the Economic and Social Council, the Administrator could include additional information on that subject, particularly in light of the discussions held at the second regular session 1996.

117. The Associate Administrator clarified that conference follow-up was taking place at the global level in the three inter-agency task forces (IATFs) and the newly approved committee on the empowerment and advancement of women and at the national level through the thematic groups under the leadership of resident coordinators. The IATFs were in the process of producing concrete outputs such as guidelines for resident coordinators. The thematic groups at the national level would lead eventually to coordinated or joint operational activities in support of conference outcomes.

118. Inter-agency follow-up to Habitat II was expected to be undertaken within the existing IATFs, whose work programme could be adjusted to accommodate the conference outcomes. UNDP was actively involved in preparations for the conference and had seconded two staff members to its secretariat. The Secretary General had pointed out at the ACC that as a United Nations System conference, the World Food Summit should receive support from the whole system in preparation and follow-up. The Administrator had co-signed, with other JCGP executive heads, a statement on world food security to the Bureau of the Inter-sessional Working Group of the Committee on World Food Security, which was preparing the World Food Summit.

119. With regard to decentralization, resident representatives could currently approve up to $1 million for single projects or programmes. Under the successor programming arrangements, decentralization with accountability would be enhanced, as subsequent discussions at the Executive Board would reveal. There were nine centres of experimentation where additional decentralization was being tried out prior to its eventual mainstreaming.

120. Finally, regarding humanitarian activities, the Associate Administrator pointed out the close relationship existing between UNDP and DHA, both multilaterally through the IASC as well as bilaterally through joint working groups. Collaborative work was also being undertaken with the World Bank in joint preparations for post-conflict recovery in Liberia. The Associate Administrator also confirmed that the focus of UNDP programme activity was on emergency

and crisis prevention, appropriate development assistance during crisis and on recovery, not on relief. He cited the examples of UNDP assistance in area development programmes reintegrating displaced persons: in Bosnia and Herzogovina, Cambodia, Central America, Mozambique and Ukraine, among others. He noted that the Administrator had assigned high priority to the question of coordination of resource mobilization for relief with mobilization for development. In that respect, the work of CCPOQ was important in bringing together the development agencies and the World Bank while the IASC represented primarily the relief partners. The open exchange of information between those two groups was seen as contributing to the joint examination of roles and resource mobilization, distinguishing between the various fund-raising mechanisms and the important role of the resident coordinator in mobilizing resources at the country level.

121. The Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Administration) thanked delegations for the critical but constructive comments made during the discussion. He informed the Executive Board about the discussion of the resident coordinator system at the recent JCGP High-level Meeting, based on comments provided by the JCGP partner organizations to the Administrator. It was agreed that UNDP would undertake an analysis of the consolidated comments and would circulate the results and follow-up actions. In future, the agencies would also be involved in the performance evaluations of the resident coordinators. In that context, he also confirmed that the newly designated UNFPA representatives would operate within the resident coordinator system, which UNFPA continued to support fully.

122. With regard to questions about the effectiveness of the programme approach, he explained that UNFPA experiences with the approach, which had been employed since 1977 through the formulation of country programmes, had been satisfactory and had facilitated the coherent utilization of programme funds. Regarding UNFPA work on revised guidelines on national execution, he stressed that UNFPA saw it as a system-wide effort that proceeded in close consultation with UNDP. The revised guidelines would be shared with the Fund's partners in CCPOQ and JCGP for comments. UNFPA would also continue its efforts to enhance national capacity-building in all UNFPA-funded programme activities, including country-level training.

123. The Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Administration) expressed his agreement with concerns that field-level follow-up to the major international conferences and summits required increased efforts. He mentioned that feedback from UNFPA offices indicated that the guidelines for the resident coordinator system on the implementation of the ICPD were being used through the work of theme groups under the guidance of the resident coordinator in many countries. UNFPA was awaiting further comments from its country offices to monitor the use of the guidelines over time. In response to a query about the CSN, he confirmed that it was the process for creating a common development vision and that JCGP was not instituting any parallel mechanisms through the common country assessment.

124. Concerning the relevance of national population councils or units, UNFPA had undertaken evaluations of such coordinating mechanisms and, with

few country-specific exceptions, had found them useful in the formulation of population policies and the coordination of external assistance. The main challenge ahead was for such institutions to extend their work beyond the traditional population sector in follow-up to the ICPD Programme of Action. On resource mobilization, he agreed on the need for intensified fund-raising efforts. He stated that the selection of advocacy as one of the core post-ICPD programme areas for UNFPA had increased activities to raise awareness at the field level.

125. Regarding inputs to the upcoming Habitat II and the World Food Summit, he explained that UNFPA had seconded a technical officer to assist in preparations for Habitat II and had actively participated in all preparatory meetings. For the World Food Summit, the executive heads of the JCGP partner organizations had issued a joint statement to highlight issues related to food security, which should receive further attention in the draft plan of action, such as food access issues, reproductive health and women's empowerment. With regard to the United Nations Special Initiative on Africa, he stated that UNFPA had raised the absence of population issues from the documents at the recent meeting of the Steering Committee on the Special Initiative. After discussions, the Steering Committee had decided to integrate gender and population as cross-cutting themes in the implementation plans and to include reproductive health specifically as a component of health-sector reform. The new understanding had been affirmed by ACC at its meeting in April.

126. Concerning collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions, the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Policy and Administration) responded that UNFPA had concluded an agreement with the World Bank that information gathered in preparation for country programmes would be shared between the organizations in order to avoid any duplication of work and provide a common basis for country level activities. In addition, joint projects were being implemented in many countries. He emphasized that despite the absence of formal agreements, meaningful consultations were regularly held at all levels of the two organizations. He confirmed that UNFPA had been working closely for two decades with the Asian Development Bank and had also concluded an agreement with the African Development Bank.

127. The Executive Board took note of the reports. At the suggestion of one delegation, it was agreed that the present reports would be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council with, as annexes: (a) the extract of the report on the annual session of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board dealing with the joint UNDP/UNFPA segment; (b) the extract of the report on the annual session of the Board dealing with the implementation of programming arrangements; and (c) the extract of the report on the second regular session 1996 of the Board dealing with evaluation.

VI. HARMONIZATION OF PRESENTATION OF BUDGETS AND ACCOUNTS

128. The Director for Finance, Personnel and Administration of UNFPA, speaking on behalf of both UNDP and UNFPA, reported on the progress being made by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF to harmonize their budget presentations. She reminded delegations of the understanding that had been widely supported at the second regular session of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, which acknowledged that, as a way of promoting understanding and better decision-making, the harmonization of budgets meant making them more similar in content and presentation and in the underlying principles employed in the preparation of accounts and budgets. She pointed out that similarity did not mean sameness.

129. The Director reported that work on that basis was proceeding. She said that the current areas of focus were: assessing the applicability to UNDP and UNFPA of the recently adopted integrated budget approach of UNICEF; defining the delineation between programme activities, programme support and administrative costs; reconciling styles of presentation, specifically concerning those for resource utilization; harmonizing budgetary classifications; and adopting a common terminology.

130. The Director asked the Executive Board to endorse the timetable for carrying out the work that had recently been approved by the UNICEF Executive Board in its decision 1996/16. That timetable foresaw presenting a joint report to the Economic and Social Council at its forthcoming session in summer 1996; an oral progress report, along with working papers, at the third regular session 1996 of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board; and initial proposals on harmonization to the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board at its first regular session 1997, after having passed the proposals through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

131. The oral progress report made to the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board at the third regular session 1996 would include a comparison of budget presentations and of definitions of terms as well as steps needed for further harmonization. The eventual proposals would take account of the discussions held in the UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF Executive Boards. The aim would be to use the harmonization proposals, once agreed to by the Executive Board, for the presentation of the biennial budgets for 1998-1999, as far as possible. The Director also advised the Board that during the discussion on budget harmonization at the UNICEF Executive Board it had been agreed to have an intersessional briefing on the subject.

132. The delegations who spoke following the Director's statement stressed the great importance they all placed on the harmonization of the budgets of the three organizations. Several of them mentioned that they understood how difficult that harmonization was; however, some felt that the work was not proceeding as rapidly as they had hoped. One delegation expressed the position of its Government, which was that if harmonization was not achieved, it would adversely affect its support to the organizations involved. Some delegations wondered whether the timetable proposed was

realistic, given the complexities of the situation. One delegation, noting that the agenda of the ACABQ was already set, asked if it was feasible to submit the proposals through ACABQ.

133. In her reply, the Director said that UNDP and UNFPA had made it a point to keep the Executive Board informed of the progress that was being made on budget harmonization. A progress report, with working papers, had been presented to the Executive Board at its second regular session 1996 six weeks earlier, in March 1996. The working group on harmonization set up by the three organizations was now focusing on having its initial proposals ready for submission to the Board at its first regular session in 1997, after submission to ACABQ.

134. Seconded by the Associate Administrator of UNDP, the Director pointed out that one of the difficulties encountered had been that UNICEF had just recently adopted its own new integrated budget presentation, covering only the headquarters and regional office budgets, not the country offices. That had inevitably slowed down the process. However, both UNDP and UNFPA felt strongly that the proposed timetable should be adhered to if harmonized budget presentations were to be presented for 1998-1999. Moreover, in the interest of harmonization, all three organizations should be working on the same schedule. The Director reiterated that harmonization did not require exactly the same presentations. But it did mean that the budgets would be similar, comparable and transparent, as pointed out by delegations during discussions at the annual session as well as at the second regular session 1996. That was a goal to which all three organizations were sincerely committed, and the proposed timetable would allow them to reach that goal.

135. Several delegations acknowledged the difficulties created by the new integrated budget for UNICEF. Two delegations expressed the view that that new budget was, in and of itself, an improvement in that organization's budget presentation. However, some delegations stressed that they did not want further difficulties to delay the progress and results they all felt were essential. On that understanding, it would be possible to endorse the proposed timetable as requested.

136. The Executive Board, therefore, noted with appreciation the commitment expressed by both UNDP and UNFPA to achieve harmonized budgetary procedures and stressed the importance of putting the new procedures in place so they would take effect starting with the budgets for the biennium 1998-1999. The Board further emphasized the importance of making the procedures, which would apply to UNICEF as well, go as far towards harmonization, transparency and comparability as possible. The Board endorsed the timetable presented by the Director on behalf of both UNDP and UNFPA as contained in paragraph three above and already endorsed by the Executive Board of UNICEF.

137. The Executive Board took note of the oral progress report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund on the harmonization of presentation of budgets and accounts, with the comments made thereon.

II. EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT ON THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD DEALING WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMMING ARRANGEMENTS

VIII. MATTERS RELATING TO THE PROGRAMMING CYCLES

A. Implementation of the successor programming arrangements

187. The Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) introduced the note by the Administrator on the implementation of the successor programming arrangements (DP/1996/21), which explained how Executive Board decision 95/23 was being put into operation. He expressed great satisfaction about the very constructive dialogue enjoyed so far with Executive Board members in relation to the item.

188. In his statement, the Assistant Administrator outlined some of the main areas where new arrangements represented changes with the past: the system offered more flexibility, more emphasis on programme quality; it was performance-based and gave more authority to the country level. Rules on national execution, programme approach and co-financing were being revised in the context of developing the new programming arrangements. Other steps taken by UNDP were: provision of technical guidance to country offices on key substantive areas; reinforcing of collaboration with specialized agencies; and piloting of resource networks on sustainable human development thematic areas. A revised format for reporting to the Executive Board on the review of country activities would provide details of specific programme activities and analysis of the overall impact of UNDP intervention on development in the respective countries.

189. The Assistant Administrator gave specific comments on three of the categories for resource allocation: regional programmes, countries in special development situations, and resources for support to resident coordinators.

190. The Manual for the programming of UNDP resources (Part II) was distributed to the Executive Board.

Debate

191. In the debate that followed, many speakers commended the statement by the Assistant Administrator for clarifying questions raised earlier. The need for effective and efficient management of development funds was underlined. One speaker called for all donors to increase substantively their official development assistance in the future. Resources managed by UNDP must be used as a catalyst that would encourage multilateral and bilateral donors to contribute to UNDP programmes and projects. In that light, the guidelines should include more information about the strategy and concrete measures that UNDP would undertake in country programming.

Country-level programming (lines 1.1.1 and 1.1.2)

192. Many delegations emphasized the central role of national Governments in designing and approving programmes in their countries. The updated guidelines were a positive step towards the implementation by UNDP of the successor programming arrangements and the flexibility in application to different country situations was welcomed. One delegation asked for more time to examine the guidelines before endorsing them, and suggested that the country cooperation framework (CCF) as a national plan should be better reflected in the guidelines. One observer delegation said that they noticed a growing complexity in the programming process of UNDP, characterized by the new programme documents, emerging supervisory bodies and numerous instances of evaluation in the context of decreasing allocation of resources.

193. Some speakers sought clarification about the role of the advisory note in the programming process and expressed concern about a possible diminishing of the authority of national Governments. Another speaker stated that the consultations referred to in paragraph 5 (b) of document DP/1996/21 had not been previously agreed and that the procedures stated in paragraph 5 (c), in which various organizations were invited to the local programme appraisal committees for reviewing the CCF were unacceptable. One speaker suggested that Governments could proceed with preparation of country programmes and identification of needs and priorities even before the advisory note was completed. Other delegations supported the involvement of civil society in the preparation of the advisory note and encouraged UNDP to involve those organizations as much as possible. UNDP should, however, maintain strict neutrality in the selection of the appropriate civil organizations with which to consult. The involvement of multilateral and bilateral donors in the local Programme Advisory Committee was also welcomed by some delegations while others asked for clarification of the role of the committee. One delegation stated that it would not be possible for his Government to involve other multilateral or bilateral donors in the preparation and review of the CCF. He also stressed the need for prior concurrence of Governments before constituting local programme advisory committees, which should essentially consist of UNDP and host Government officials.

194. With regard to monitoring and evaluation, one delegation emphasized the need to use results in a roductive way and hoped that reports would be critical and analytical. Several delegations supported the issuance of review reports on a particular country to the Executive Board every four years rather than on a biennial basis as envisaged in the report while one delegation favoured more frequent reviews. A question was raised about whether reports should be standardized. One observer delegation stated that the monitoring of the evaluation system for allocation of additional resources was excessive and that the guidelines and procedures for the allocation of resources should be reconsidered, in order to discontinue redundant bodies and procedures.

195. One delegation questioned whether the assignment of 60 per cent of base country-level target resource allocations from core (TRAC) resources would still allow flexibility of the core fund.

Regional programming (line 1.2)

196. Some delegations asked for more clarification on the role of regional economic commissions as well as on the regional cooperation framework referred to in document DP/1996/21. The use of the word "strategy" should be avoided. It was noted that the focus of the regional programme must be sharpened to concentrate on activities that were more effectively carried out at the regional level, such as those in the environment and HIV/AIDS. One delegation asked how the regional dimension could be incorporated into country strategy notes since the notes were not universal.

Programming in countries in special development situations (line 1.1.3)

197. Delegations commented favourably on the guidelines developed for use of line 1.1.3. One delegation, on behalf of others, while welcoming the initiative to elaborate the guidelines, said it would be useful if UNDP could clarify further the scope of the new arrangements and the emphasis placed on prevention and rehabilitation versus relief activities. The delegation cited the importance attached to the follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56 on the coordination of humanitarian assistance, and asked UNDP to discuss the new proposed guidelines with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), created by the resolution, in particular the proposal to develop common strategic frameworks to guide resource allocation. UNDP should then report to the Executive Board on the outcome of the discussions in the context of the follow-up to the Council resolution. In particular, the proposal on resource allocation would need to be clarified as it related to existing funding mechanisms, including the Consolidated Appeals Process. It was also suggested that the proposal by UNDP to strengthen the coordination function in response to sudden crises be discussed among agencies. Elaboration of the comparative advantage of UNDP and suggestions and options on its specific role and operational responsibilities in emergencies would be welcomed. Some delegations underlined the need for UNDP to concentrate on its development dimension in emergency situations. That meant focusing on prevention and disaster preparedness as a regular part of the development agenda and enhancing stabilization and sustainability in the post-emergency situation. The response of UNDP in emergencies was part of a wider framework of an integrated approach to crisis management. Through its central role in development and the resident coordinator system, UNDP had a key role to play in bringing different actors together. In the disbursements of funds under line 1.1.3, UNDP would need to look into the role of different actors, including itself, and assess which had the best capacity to implement the activities needed.

198. The use of experience and lessons learned in developing the guidelines was welcomed. UNDP was encouraged to work closely with other relevant actors, such as the World Bank on post-emergency rehabilitation or with UNHCR in contingency planning in response to pending crisis situations. The resident representative played an important role in coordinating the United Nations system response through the United Nations

Disaster Management Team. The authority to allocate up to $200,000 to support rapid emergency response activities by the resident coordinator was supported.

199. The Director of the Geneva Office, Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), on behalf of the Under-Secretary General of DHA, welcomed the initiative of UNDP in providing for the needs of countries in special development situations as described in document DP/1996/21. That was an important and necessary initiative based on experience and recognized that attention needed to be paid to rehabilitation and development during periods of humanitarian crisis. He stated that the Under-Secretary General of DHA also served as the Emergency Relief Coordinator, assisted by the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) and noted that IASC was not mentioned in the guidelines. In referring to paragraph 9(a), he mentioned that it was his assumption that strategic frameworks would cover both relief and recovery programmes. In that regard, he proposed that the initiative of the strategic framework be discussed with IASC members to ensure proper definition in the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian and development partners. It was also important to ensure the useful and necessary distinction between relief and development activities in order that the various resource mobilization mechanisms were used in the most appropriate and effective way. He further underlined the need for all relevant parties to be clear about their responsibilities and the lines of accountability for those actions.

Global, interregional and special activities (line 1.3)

200. Questions were raised about the contents of the global programme. One delegation referred to the combat against the use of illicit drugs as a possible area to be covered by the global programmes.

Support to the resident coordinator (line 3.1)

201. A query was raised regarding the financing of public information activities at the country level within the context of the resident coordinator system. One delegation announced a contribution of 3 million Swiss francs in support of the resident coordinator function.

Responses by the Secretariat

202. The Assistant Administrator welcomed the suggestions for improvements in the guidelines for the implementation of the new programming arrangements and responded to the questions raised by delegations. He underlined the importance of UNDP support to priority areas where the organization had a comparative advantage. UNDP was open to the idea of reporting every four years on country reviews. He underlined the fact that the dialogue envisaged in connection with preparations of the advisory

notes as well as with the local programme appraisal committees would be undertaken with the full knowledge of national authorities. The note, a UNDP internal document, played a very important role in the programming process in ensuring that consistency was maintained within the organization and that experience gained as well as expertise available within the organization was made full use of. The note did not therefore attempt to dilute the importance of the CCF and national ownership. It was clarified that the guidelines did not require the approval of the Executive Board as they formed part of UNDP internal procedures. However, as a "living document", the guidelines would be refined over time and thus the comments on the guidelines by the Board were of great value.

203. With regard to regional economic commissions, he stated that they had a mandate to provide advisory services to members of the region. Regular and specially recruited advisers worked only on the request of a programme country. A constructive dialogue with regional commissions and their important role in that area was sought. The regional framework approach was a useful tool in relation to certain sectoral issues but would not represent a regional strategy for development. The regional bureaux in UNDP would focus on draft programme proposals and then discuss them with partners in the region. With reference to the global programme, UNDP planned to submit a framework to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session 1996. The problem of illicit drugs would be considered in the preparations for the global framework.

204. The Director of the Emergency Response Division of the Office for United Nations Support and Services emphasized the development role of UNDP, underlining that it was not a relief organization. Further, the primary UNDP role in coordination was to contribute to the formulation of a holistic approach to the requirements of countries facing crisis and to ensure that development needs were addressed as an integrated response. He referred to the discussions held with resident coordinators, DHA, United Nations agencies and NGOs in formulating the guidelines and confirmed the commitment of UNDP to further discussions and clarifications within IASC, particularly on those aspects pertaining to coordination and the development of a strategic framework, including its relationship to existing funding mechanisms. He noted that while the guidelines did not mention the IASC specifically, they did refer to the close involvement of the United Nations Disaster Management Team (DMT) and the United Nations Country Team, which served as the operational extension of IASC at the country level. In response to a question regarding the role of UNDP in the restoration of essential infrastructure, he stated that UNDP did not intend to duplicate the role of the international financial institutions and did not forsee using core resources to provide capital assistance for reconstruction. Rather, UNDP would focus primarily on the provision of assessment and pre-investment studies. In assisting to provide related rehabilitation activities with co-financed resources, UNDP would maintain its established role in undertaking small-scale projects to re-establish basic infrastructure to support transport of goods as well as water, sanitation and electricity services; primarily to facilitate the resettlement of uprooted populations and the support of productive economic activity.

Conclusion

205. The Administrator thanked the Executive Board for its comments and gave assurance that UNDP would collaborate with its partners, particularly concerning line 1.1.3. Clear lines of responsibility were necessary to ensure the link between relief and development. With regard to the implementation of the programming arrangements, the line of accountability was to him and then to the Executive Board.

206. The Administrator informed the Executive Board that small inconsistencies had arisen in the application of the resource distribution methodology approved in decision 95/23. UNDP was making the necessary, albiet very minor, adjustments and charging the unallocated reserve, which had been set up for the purpose. Resource allocations to other countries remained unaffected. He also informed the Board that the distribution of regional resources (under line 1.2) to the individual regions would be based essentially on the respective percentage shares of country target for resource assignment from the core (TRAC) resources, but would also take into account the number of countries in each region since that was necessary for the viability for regional programmes.

207. The Executive Board took note of the note by the Administrator on matters relating to the programming cycles (DP/1996/21) and the comments made thereon.

III. EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT ON THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION 1996 OF THE UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD DEALING WITH EVALUATION

XII. EVALUATION

200. The Administrator reported on developments that had taken place in UNDP since the first regular session 1996. He noted that regional meetings of resident representatives/resident coordinators had been held for Africa, the Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean. He had visited 12 programme countries, including five of the Gulf States, and six donor countries, the latter with the purpose of mobilizing core resources. Also taking place during the past few months had been efforts to move major programming guidelines forward. A meeting of senior management to discuss the UNDP reform process had been held from 21 to 24 February 1996. Also of special note was the formulation of an integrated United Nations action plan for follow up on the outcome of United Nations conferences and the launching of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. The reassignment exercise had also been concluded.

201. The Administrator requested the Executive Board to examine the possibility of rationalizing the frequency and composition of its meetings with UNDP in order to maximize dialogue on substantive issues.

202. The Director of the Office for Evaluation and Strategic Planning (OESP), in presenting the report of the Administrator on evaluation (DP/1996/14), welcomed the opportunity to continue the dialogue with the Executive Board regarding the role of evaluation in helping UNDP become a more effective and accountable learning organization.

203. She highlighted the achievements of OESP and the challenges ahead, noting in particular strategic evaluations conducted, dissemination of lessons learned and the expected availability to country offices of the evaluation central database by the end of 1996. New evaluation guidelines would be also be issued in 1996. Compliance and the scope of the 1996 work programme presented challenges. On the issue of compliance, OESP was proposing to institute two new measures: presentation of an annual compliance report to the Executive Board

and identification in the 1996-1997 corporate plan of the full programme of mandatory evaluations.

204. The tentative work programme for OESP for 1996 would continue to address the most vital issues, covering strategic evaluations as well as regular evaluations, including those of country programmes. It also addressed important methodological work, including the finalization of new guidelines needed to make the transition to the programme approach and to the successor programming arrangements. There would be an integrated process to deal with monitoring, evaluation and planning. Another key innovation would be the finalization of the programme impact and performance assessment system. The 1996 workplan also foresaw support activities for the development of national monitoring and evaluation capacity, the continuation of collaboration on harmonization and other substantive issues arising from the triennial comprehensive policy review with various intergovernmental and inter-agency bodies dealing with evaluation.

205. The Director of OESP concluded that UNDP would become a more accountable learning organization by supporting dynamic linkages between evaluation and key strategic initiatives that repositioned the organization as a more knowledge-based organization.

206. Fulfilling that vision would require strong commitment by management, especially with respect to monitoring, evaluation compliance and the use of feedback.

207. Several delegations expressed their appreciation to the Administrator for his presence and for the information he provided on the activities of UNDP since the first regular session 1996 and especially the developments concerning the reform process in the organization.

208. Many speakers also thanked the Director of OESP for her presentation and the information presented to the Executive Board, which included the evaluation compliance report and the tentative workplan for evaluation activities in 1996.

209. The ensuing discussions stressed the importance given by members of the Board to the monitoring and evaluation function. Some members emphasized the advantages of the link between evaluation and strategic planning and underscored the linkages between evaluation, quality service and control as well as performance. They also recognized the work undertaken by UNDP with programme countries to increase the capacity for evaluation. Several delegations commended the efforts made by UNDP to improve the quality of evaluations and to make the function a priority throughout the organization.

210. The issues and questions were answered directly by the Director of OESP. The major issues were: confidence between UNDP and the Executive Board; compliance; procedures and criteria used in evaluation; reporting; dissemination of lessons learned and feedback mechanisms; integration of evaluation in the new successor programming arrangements; and the commitment of the senior management to evaluation and monitoring.

211. Confidence. One delegation raised the issue of confidence of programme and donor countries towards the work being done in evaluation. Five points were

raised: (a) examination of focus areas in evaluations; (b) sufficiency of evaluations; (c) degrees of lessons learned; (d) building an evaluation culture in UNDP; and (e) generation of information on findings.

212. Another delegation cautioned that the nature of technical cooperation made it difficult to evaluate the work of UNDP since the notion of impact was conditional to extraneous factors. In that context, the question of confidence had to be examined in relation to clear expectations from donor and programme countries.

213. In her response, the Director of OESP recalled the various initiatives taken by UNDP to bring to the Executive Board concerns about evaluation, to increase transparency and to work in collaboration with other organizations. She recognized that more work was needed to put in place systems generating adequate information about the learning process.

214. Information presented to the Executive Board included: the statistical analysis prepared by the former Central Evaluation Office and presented to the Board on a biennial basis; the 1993 feedback study, which highlighted the lack of sufficient attention paid to evaluation; the presentation by OESP to the Board in 1995 of the paper entitled "Rethinking Evaluation"; the OESP publication series on lessons learned, and the issuance of the compliance report. In addition, she noted that OESP worked closely in matters of evaluation and monitoring with other organizations and countries such as the Swedish International Development Agency, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Netherlands, Norway and Japan. At the United Nations system level, UNDP was chairing the Inter-Agency Working Group on evaluation and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy working group on harmonization. Within the tripartite arrangement, all evaluations conducted by UNDP at the programme and project level involved other organizations. In fulfilling its mandate of building capacity for monitoring and evaluation, OESP was working with 30 developing countries and had published monographs on the monitoring and evaluation systems of 17 countries.

215. The Director of OESP added that evaluations in OESP met all the required standards with respect to independence. To the question whether UNDP was learning enough through evaluations, the Director gave the example of the evaluation of the energy sector, whose recommendations provided a platform for the promulgation of a new policy by the Sustainable Energy and Environment Division (SEED). The selection of topics to be evaluated was made by OESP in consultation with management. Some of the evaluations were mandated by the Executive Board and the Director welcomed suggestions for the inclusion of evaluations in the 1996 work programme.

216. Compliance. With regard to compliance, many speakers welcomed the issuance of the OESP report on the subject as a step towards increased transparency in reporting. Some delegations were concerned about the reasons why full compliance had not been achieved and requested some explanations on the differences in compliance rates for the various regions. The case of the Latin American region was singled out because of the sharp decline in the compliance rate between 1988 and 1989. The delegations also sought clarification on the methodology used for the compilation of statistical information in the

compliance report. One delegation pointed out a discrepancy between the overall compliance rate given in the report (52 per cent) and the figure given in the report to the Board of Auditors (80 per cent). Some suggested the extension of mandatory evaluations to projects with budgets below $1 million.

217. The Director of OESP acknowledged that current compliance rates were not at an acceptable level. The system to monitor compliance was in place, however, and enforcement had remained an issue. The issuance of the compliance report had brought the problem to the attention of Senior Management, who was now requesting the regional bureaux to provide explanations for their rates of compliance. The issue would be dealt with through the corporate plan and managers would be held accountable through the performance appraisal review system.

218. The Director noted that the sharp decline in the compliance rate in the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean between 1988 and 1989 coincided with very low indicative planning figures in the region, following the overall reduction at the beginning of the fifth programming cycle, the decline being explained by a shift in priorities towards resource mobilization. The discrepancy between the figures contained in the report of the Board of Auditors and the compliance report were explained by the fact that compliance was considered in the strictest sense for the compliance report. The Director announced that OESP would be available to discuss the compliance report in depth with the members of the Executive Board after the session.

219. Procedures and criteria used in evaluation. Two queries were raised on the existence of criteria at the project/programme design level to accommodate evaluations and on the type of criteria used to select specific evaluations. Two delegations also raised the issue of criteria for impact measurement.

220. The Director of OESP responded that in all programme and project evaluations, the inclusion of sustainable human development indicators and capacity development indicators were mandatory. For strategic evaluations, timeliness was a determining factor in selection. Impact measurement was being addressed through the programme impact and performance assessment system. The Office was also undertaking a joint study with the Swedish International Development Agency on the subject.

221. Reporting. Delegations expressed their expectation that a new reporting format would allow for the elaboration of clear policy guidance by the Executive Board. Some delegations felt that reporting on evaluation should be consolidated to include a yearly annual report, evaluation findings, compliance report and the workplan for evaluation; others suggested that reporting should address implementation issues. Two delegations requested that specific case studies as well as action taken be included in the report. On the programme of work for 1996, two delegations suggested the inclusion of a specific evaluation on the impact of the unpredictability of UNDP resources on the development programme of recipient countries. There was a consensus that dialogue between the Executive Board and UNDP should be strengthened on the issue of reporting. Two delegations proposed that OESP report directly to the Executive Board on major evaluations.

222. Elaborating on the number of possible levels of reporting, the Director of OESP reiterated that OESP needed clear guidance from the Executive Board in order to prepare an annual report that would meet expectations. The timing of the report for submission at the annual session rather than at the second session would allow OESP to compile more complete information. The Director also agreed that results of strategic evaluation would be presented to the Board.

223. Dissemination of lessons learned and feedback mechanisms. Three delegations stressed the importance of the feedback mechanism to incorporate lessons learned in programming. They requested an explanation of the relationship between OESP, the regional bureaux, country offices, executing agencies and Governments and how they worked together in providing feedback and lessons learned. While recognizing the complexity of monitoring the inclusion of evaluation recommendations into programming and execution, the Executive Board members encouraged UNDP to pursue their effort in that area and to continue to improve feedback mechanisms. Some delegations had questions on the availability to recipient countries of evaluation results.

224. The Director of OESP committed to providing detailed information of the decentralized system of evaluation within UNDP. On the availability of evaluation results, she confirmed that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee database was accessible to all countries and that the UNDP evaluation database would be accessible to programme countries by December 1996. In addition, evaluation lessons would be available on Internet.

225. Integration of lessons learned into successor programming arrangements. Several delegations stressed the importance of evaluation in the context of the successor programming arrangements.

226. Commitment of Senior Management to evaluation and monitoring. Three delegations emphasized the critical role of UNDP Senior Management in ensuring that evaluation and monitoring be given proper recognition at all levels in the organization.

227. One delegation suggested that evaluation and monitoring should become key objectives in the next organizational plan. Questions on the commitment of senior management to evaluation and monitoring were directed to the Administrator.

228. The Administrator reaffirmed his total confidence in OESP to deal with issues at hand and asserted that he was committed to addressing the shortcomings highlighted by the Executive Board. The highest level of compliance would be sought and staff would be directly accountable. High standards of evaluation would be applied with core resources as well as co-financing. Feedback mechanisms would be reinforced to ensure that results of evaluation had a direct bearing on programming and policy. The Administrator also requested the Executive Board to reconfirm the organizational location and structure of OESP by keeping together the evaluation and the strategic planning functions.

229. On the issue of donor confidence, the Administrator underlined the fact that all institutions were now being challenged to demonstrate effectiveness and results and that evaluation was one way of ensuring that results were achieved.

230. Closing remarks were made by the Director of OESP, who thanked the Executive Board for the importance attached to evaluation and welcomed the opportunity of a continuous dialogue to improve the quality of evaluations in UNDP.

231. The Executive Board adopted the following decision:

96/20. UNDP evaluation

The Executive Board

1. Recognizes the importance of evaluation and monitoring as mechanisms providing information on the operational progress and impact of United Nations Development Programme activities for all participants in the activities of the Programme, for all Programme staff and for the Executive Board;

2. Stresses the fundamental importance of feeding back the lessons of monitoring and evaluation into planning and management in order to improve continually the quality of the organization's output, and the need for this concept to be shared by all its staff;

3. Requests the Administrator, in this context, and through the mechanism of the organizational plan, to ensure that evaluation and monitoring are firmly established in the management culture of the United Nations Development Programme by, inter alia:

(a) Raising the profile of accountability and of staff and programme performance monitoring and evaluation in the Programme so that all its divisions recognize its vital importance;

(b) Reviewing and revising as necessary, and in the light of "initiatives for change" and the successor programming arrangements, the systems and criteria for selecting subjects for evaluation; the handling in evaluations of the Programme's operational implementation of its areas of focus; opportunities for joint evaluations with other United Nations bodies; and the actions required of Programme personnel, including clear objective-setting at all levels;

(c) Linking compliance with monitoring and evaluation procedures with the Programme's personnel management and reporting systems;

(d) Reporting the results of strategic evaluations to the Executive Board;

4. Calls upon the Administrator to ensure that evaluation work has the necessary degree of independence to carry out objective evaluations; and to report to the Executive Board at its annual session 1997 on progress made on the implementation of the present decision.

29 March 1996